POLLINATOR PARTNERSHIP CANADA

PROTECTING HONEY BEES FROM PESTICIDES IN HIGHBUSH BLUEBERRY

COMMUNICATION AND REGISTRATION

- Write and agree to a contract that defines expectations and responsibilities between beekeeper and grower, including protocol for suspected pesticide incidents involving pollinators.
- Do not leave unmarked colonies near fields. Post the beekeeper's name, address, and phone number on apiaries, large enough to be read at a distance.
- Register your colonies with your Provincial Ministry/Department of Agriculture. You can notify pesticide applicators of the location of your apiaries using the BeeConnected app http://www.beeconnected.ca/.
- Communicate clearly to the grower and/or applicator where your colonies are located, when they will arrive, and when you will remove them.
- Ask the grower what pesticides, if any, will be applied while bees are in the field, when they will be applied, and whether the label includes precautionary statements for bees. Ask them to contact you if they decide on any new applications.
- Request 48 hours notice from growers when applications are necessary so that safety measures to protect the hives can be taken.

PEST MANAGEMENT

- Learn about pest problems and management programs to develop mutually beneficial agreements with growers concerning pollination services and prudent use of insecticides. Seek information on major crop pests and treatment options for your region.
- Miticides, such as those used in hives for varroa control, are pesticides too. Use care when managing pests in and around bee hives, apiaries, and beekeeping storage facilities. Use pesticides for their intended use and follow all label directions carefully. Regularly replace brood comb to reduce exposure to residual miticides.

Photo courtesy Andony Melathopoulos

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Place hives 6 m away from the crop with a no spray buffer (top photo), rather than directly adjacent to the crop (bottom photo), if possible.

PROTECTING HONEY BEES FROM EXPOSURE

- Work with growers to find a location for beehives that is at least 6 m away from the crop, including no-spray buffers.
- If it is not feasible to move your colonies prior to a pesticide application, protect honey bee colonies by covering them with wet burlap the night before a crop is treated with an insecticide. Keep these covers wet and in place as long as feasible (depending on residual toxicity of pesticide) to protect bees.
- Do not return colonies to fields treated with insecticides that are highly toxic to bees until at least 48 to 72 hours after application. Bee deaths are most likely to occur during the first 24 hours following application.
- If practical, isolate apiaries from intensive insecticide applications and protect them from chemical drift. Establish holding yards for honey bee colonies at least 4 km from crops being treated with insecticides that are highly toxic to bees.
- Place colonies on ridge tops rather than in depressions. Insecticides drift down into low-lying areas and flow with morning wind currents. Inversion conditions are particularly hazardous.
- Verify that a clean source of water is available for bees, and if there is not one available, provide one.
- Feed bees when nectar is scarce to prevent long-distance foraging to treated crops.
- In pesticide risk-prone areas, inspect bees often to recognize problems early.

SEE FULL DOCUMENT

www.pollinatorpartnership.ca